

Good Afternoon,

My name is Noah Kelley-Dillard, and I manage the potato operation for Fedco Seed Company, in Clinton Maine. I represent Fedco in strong opposition to the proposed legislation. We are a worker owned company, founded 48 years ago this year, and we continue to grow thanks to our tremendously loyal customer base. We employ around 120 of our neighbors from this great state during our peak seasons, with around 40 full time workers year round. I have worked here for 16 years. We have been doing business with Colorado potato growers for at least twice as long.

I am proud of Fedco's reputation in the garden trade industry. Our customer loyalty is huge, as measured by customers returning year after year. Many of our customers have been with us for decades, and this is because of the exceptionally high quality seed they expect, and know they will receive from us, year after year. I couldn't maintain this reputation for our product line if it wasn't backed by the highest quality seed coming from our growers, in Maine, as well as in Colorado and elsewhere.

Our customers are farmers and gardeners, they are the stewards of our soil. If we were to sell dirty, infected, contaminated seed, that would be an existential betrayal of our customers' trust and loyalty, and we are not willing to compromise that. Furthermore, my line of work is fundamentally reliant on a healthy, thriving, and sanitary potato industry in this state, one that is not only trusted and seen as a leader by other states, but one that seeks to further interstate commerce, cooperation, and collaboration whose foundation is clean healthy soil.

Needless to say, I take the phytosanitation of our seed potatoes incredibly seriously. And my willingness to import potatoes from Colorado or elsewhere is based on years, even decades, of relationship and trust with these growers. I know their growing practices. I know their standards of quality. If I have any question about anything related to that, time after time it is answered immediately with detailed inspection or phytosanitary records. I say with confidence that these guys, like most of our guys, don't mess around when it comes to seed quality and phytosanitary standards. There is zero question that the seed I get from Colorado is of the highest quality.

Of the 50 or so potato varieties Fedco offers, roughly 1/5 of those varieties come from Colorado. And to be clear, these are varieties exclusively grown in Colorado. I cannot source them from Maine, or any other state. On top of the varieties I already depend on from Colorado, there are at least half a dozen other very promising varieties in the pipeline there that I am actively preparing to offer our customers in the next year or two. If this proposed legislation moves forward, it will wipe out a fifth of our inventory selection, and years of deep relationship building, all of which would require tremendous time and effort to rebuild. It will be an existential threat to Fedco's financial viability in this state. This policy proposal puts a thriving Maine business on the chopping block for no good reason.

Instead of policies that seek to eradicate free and responsible trade between states, our industry needs policies that reflect the

interconnected nature of this nation's potato industry. we need policies that fundamentally support a healthy thriving industry across state lines, rather than a patchwork of policies of hardened borders that will not protect this state or the nations vital potato industry as a whole.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Noah Kelley-Dillard
Fedco Seed Company
LD 473

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